



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## WHITLOCK ATTENDS AMERICAN LEGION MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock had the opportunity to attend the American Legion Mid Winter Conference in Oacoma last week.

American Legion and Auxiliary officers and chairmen updated their members on their foundation, finances, Boys State program, Youth Trooper Academy, Scouting program, social media, membership drive, and legislation.

Secretary provided attendees an update on legislation, the Fallen Heroes Bridge program, the Michael J Fitzmaurice State

Veterans Home, the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery, and the state benefits disbursed in 2021. Secretary Whitlock thanked the American Legion and their partners for the funds they raised and donated to the Midwest Honor Flight program.

“Attending these conferences affords me the opportunity to visit one-on-one with members of the veterans service organizations,” said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. “We always appreciate the opportunity to hear from our partners.”

The State American Legion conference will be held in Watertown, June 16-19.



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# SDDVA HOSTS BOOTH AT PIERRE GUN SHOW

SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Swanson and Finance Director Jeff Haiar hosted a booth at the annual gun show in Pierre this past weekend.

This outreach event afforded staff the opportunity to visit with veterans about the benefits, services, and programs that are provided for them and their families.



# SDDVA ANNUAL REPORT

SDDVA's annual report has been completed and has been provided to the legislators as required by statute.

The 2021 annual report highlights the outstanding accomplishments of our superb team of dedicated professionals and the unmatched support we receive from our county, tribal, state and federal partners and all of our veterans service organizations and their members.

This report demonstrates our commitment to ensuring South Dakota remains the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

It can be viewed on the SDDVA website at:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/Other%20Publications/2021%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



## 2021 Annual Report



# USS IOWA VETERANS ASSOCIATION TO GATHER IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Each year, the USS Iowa Veterans Association hosts a reunion, allowing former shipmates of all generations to get together, renew past friendships, make new friendships, learn from each other, share experiences, and swap sea stories.

The 2022 Reunion site is the Best Western Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Rapid City and will be held August 19-23, 2022.

If interested in attending, you can register at: [2022REUNION REGISTRATION FORM RAPID CITY.docx \(ussiwavetassn.com\)](#).

To learn more about the USS Iowa Veterans Association, visit: [Veterans Association, | USS IOWA VETERANS ASSOCIATION \(ussiwavetassn.com\)](#).

## VA BLACK HILLS PRESENTS:

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everyone!"





# ZIEBACH COUNTY NAMES NEW VSO

Ziebach County Commissioners have named a new county veterans service officer effective February 8, 2022.

Jeremy Holien of Firesteel has accepted the joint position of veterans service officer and emergency manager.

Jeremy will be in the VSO office on Wednesdays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. His email address is: [jholien.ziebach.county.vso@gmail.com](mailto:jholien.ziebach.county.vso@gmail.com).

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Jeremy to our network.



## VA Research Study for OIF/OEF/OND Veterans



Investigators: Drs. Jeffrey Simons, Raluca Simons, and Pat Ronan

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>What:</u></b> Study of stress and health behaviors</li> <li>• <b><u>Where:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sioux Falls VA</li> <li>- University of South Dakota – Vermillion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b><u>You need to be:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Between the ages of 18 and 60 years old</li> <li>- Have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b><u>The study will involve 22 visits over a period of 2 years</u></b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>If you participate you will receive:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity to assist future veterans by participating in research aimed at improving veteran health.</li> <li>- Compensation for your time and travel may include \$50 for completing a baseline assessment, \$50 for each of 10 in office assessments, and up to \$135/week for each of 17 self-monitoring weeks completed, depending on number of completed assessments (up to ~2500)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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**For more information please contact:**

The research team at (605) 658-3730, or email  
hbr@usd.edu, raluca.simons@usd.edu, or patrick.ronan@va.gov

# VA ENCOURAGES DONATING BLOOD AMID BLOOD CRISIS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs and its participating VA medical centers across the country are in the midst of [“Roll Up Your Sleeve 2022”](#) blood drives through March in response to the ongoing national need for blood during the continuing COVID-19 public health emergency.

The VA teamed up with the American Red Cross and America’s Blood Centers’ regional blood collection organizations, in December — activating its extensive network of medical facilities to support the nation’s need to replenish the blood supply.

The Department is exercising its “fourth mission” to back up the country’s health care systems in times of emergency. Eligible individuals are encouraged to donate blood. Donors may give blood no matter their COVID-19 vaccination status.

“In an effort to continue to save lives, exercising the VA’s fourth mission at this critical time greatly helps the Department meet the need for blood and blood products in communities across the nation,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “While we continue to focus heavily on the care of veterans during this challenging pandemic, blood donation is more important than ever, and its impact can result in as many as three lives saved through one blood donation.”

The VA facility-based blood drives have instituted safety precautions recommended by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) — requiring masks, following social distancing guidelines, and enhancing their disinfection protocols. These practices help ensure the safety of blood donors, blood drive hosts and staff at blood drives.

“As Americans, we recognize that our civic duty is to help our fellow neighbors and stand ready to always support those in need. During this national blood crisis, the Red Cross asks our country to come together and roll up a sleeve to help ensure veterans and all patients receive the care and lifesaving blood products they need,” said President and CEO Gail McGovern.

“Veterans are some of our most dedicated blood donors in this country. We greatly appreciate both their service and commitment. The partnership between the VA and community blood centers is a way to help ensure all patients have access to blood, while spreading awareness of the ongoing need for blood donations,” said America’s Blood Centers CEO Kate Fry.

To find blood donation locations in your community visit [RedCrossBlood.org](#) or [Americasblood.org](#) to make an appointment. Individuals can mention the VA “Roll Up Your Sleeve 2022” or use #ROLLUPYOURSLEEVEVA2022 at their community blood collection site and their donation will be linked to the VA national campaign.

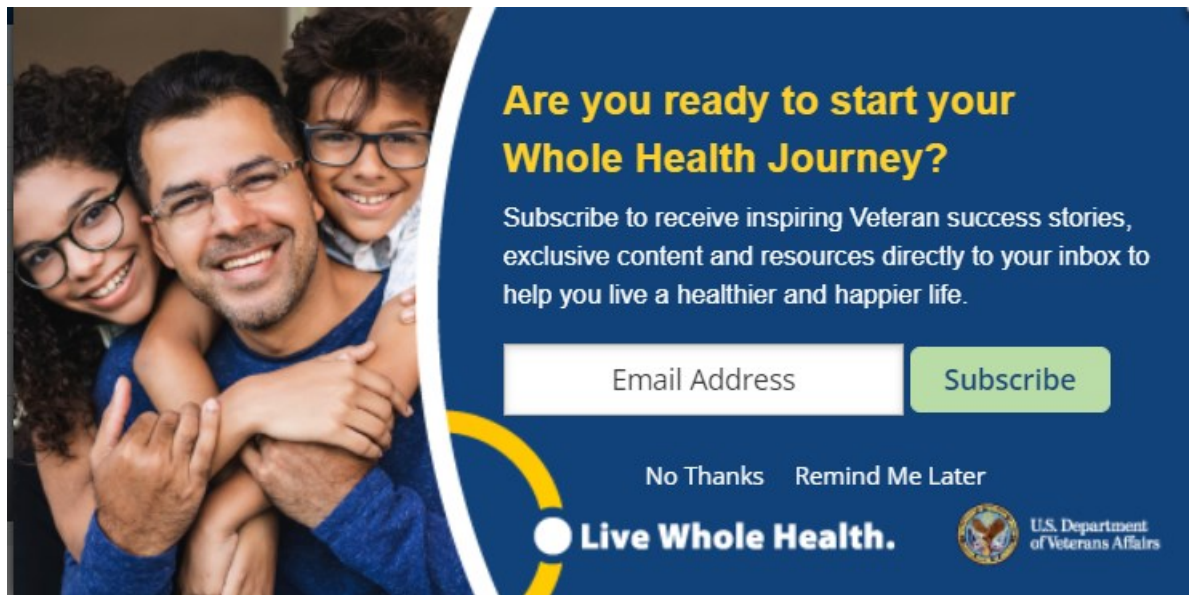
VA-hosted blood drives are scheduled on a rolling basis. Those wishing to donate blood at a VA facility should contact them directly.

# VA ASKS FOR PUBLIC INPUT ON VETERANS OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs seeks input from veterans outdoor recreation groups on how it can facilitate the health and wellness of veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors through improved access to public lands and other outdoor spaces.

[Research](#) shows access to the outdoors may contribute significantly to better health and well-being and the VA wants to learn how it can best integrate outdoor experiences into its [Whole-Health approach](#) to providing care to veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

“We want to use this opportunity to understand how the VA can work closely with veterans outdoor recreation groups that have been leading the way in using outdoor experiences to help their fellow veterans heal and stay healthy,” said Deputy Assistant Undersecretary for Health for



Patient Care Services Maria Llorente, M.D. “We look forward to collaborating with our partners in making outdoor recreation a foundational piece of the VA’s world-class, Whole-Health-based care.”

As part of this request for information, the VA is asking individuals, groups, and entities involved in providing veterans outdoor recreation to submit comments, from Feb. 23 to March 25, to help guide the work of strengthening the relationship between the VA and managers of public lands, identifying barriers that may prevent veteran access to public lands to augment delivery of health and wellness services, and making recommendations to address those barriers.

The notice of request for public comment is scheduled to publish in the Federal Register Wednesday, Feb. 23. However, an unofficial version of the document is available for viewing at [Federal Register public-inspection 2022-03734 request for information on Veterans outdoor recreation](#). The official version of this document, supporting documents and additional information about this document was scheduled to publish the morning of Feb. 23.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 26-27—SD Vietnam Veterans & Era Reunion—Moose Lodge—Mitchell  
Feb 27-Mar 2—DAV Mid Winter Conference—Washington, DC  
Feb 27-Mar 3—National VFW Legislative Conference—Washington, DC  
Mar 4—USD/SBASD Free Drop-In Legal Clinic—Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—  
Sioux Falls—9:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)  
Mar 5—USD/SBASD Free Drop-In Legal Clinic—VFW—(520 Main Avenue)—Brookings—9:00 am—4:00  
pm (CT)  
Mar 10—Crossroads—Virtual Event—5:15 pm—8:00 pm (MST)  
Mar 26—Stand Up for Women Veterans Retreat—Our Savior Lutheran Church (909) W. 33rd Street)—Sioux  
Falls—8:30 am—1:30 pm (CT)  
Apr 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)  
Apr 8-10—DAV of South Dakota State Convention—Rushmore Hotel and Suites (445 Mt. Rushmore Road)—  
Rapid City  
Apr 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Military Heritage Alliance Building—Spirit of America Room—(1600  
W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)  
Jun 9-12—State VFW Convention—4-H Fairgrounds—Mitchell  
Jun 12—Midwest Honor Flight Annual Honor Ride—SD Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls  
Jun 16-19—State American Legion Conference—Watertown  
Jul 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)  
Jul 18-23—National Veterans Golden Age Games—Sioux Falls  
Aug 6-9—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL  
Aug 14-19—Military Order of the Purple Heart National Convention—Rapid City  
Aug 15-17—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School  
Sep 1—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair  
Sep 1-5—South Dakota State Fair  
Sep 10—Heroes Helping with Horsepower Military Appreciation Event—W. Main Street—Ethan—Festivities begin  
at 8:00 am (CT)  
Oct 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)  
Dec 17—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—  
11:00 am (CT)

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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